

19.

The Miracle of the Sun

“We looked easily at the sun,” Ti Marto remembered, “which for some reason did not blind us. It seemed to flicker on and off, first one way, then another. It cast its rays in many directions and painted everything in different colors – the trees, the people, the air and the ground.”

“But what was most extraordinary, I thought, was that the sun did not hurt our eyes. Everything was still and quiet, and everyone was looking up. Then at a certain moment, the sun appeared to stop spinning. It then began to move and to dance in the sky until it seemed to detach itself from its place and fall upon us. It was a terrible moment.”¹

Maria Carreira saw it too:

“The sun turned everything to different colors – yellow, blue and white. Then it shook and trembled. It looked like a wheel of fire that was going to fall on people. They began to cry out, ‘We shall all be killed!’ Others called to Our Lady to save them. They recited acts of contrition. One woman began to confess her sins aloud, advertising that she had done this and that...When at last the sun stopped leaping and moving, we all breathed our relief. We were still alive, and the miracle which the children had foretold had been seen by everyone.”²

Seventy thousand people saw the same thing, and hundreds of the witnesses have solemnly testified to what they saw; some of them were fifteen miles away, but they saw the same thing as those right next to the children. There were believers at the Cova, and there were curiosity seekers, and there were a good number of Freemasons waiting for the Jesuit plot to blow a tire. The latter were confounded when the skeptical journalists present reported what had happened.

Like *O Dia*, the Lisbon daily, which published a special report on the October apparition which read in part:

“At one o’clock in the afternoon, midday by the sun, the rain stopped. The sky, pearly grey in color, illuminated the vast arid veil so that the eyes could easily be fixed upon it. The

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grey mother-of-pearl tone turned into a sheet of silver which broke up as the clouds were torn apart and the silver sun, enveloped in the same gauzy grey light, was seen to whirl and turn in the circle of broken clouds. A cry went up from every mouth and people fell on their knees on the muddy ground.

"The light turned a beautiful blue, as if it had come through the stained glass windows of a cathedral, and spread itself over the people who knelt with outstretched hands. The blue faded slowly, and then the light seemed to pass through yellow glass. Yellow stains fell against white handkerchiefs, against the dark skirts of the women. They were repeated on the trees, on the stones, and on the *serra*. People wept and prayed with uncovered heads, in the presence of a miracle they had awaited. The seconds seemed like hours, so vivid were they."³

Avelino de Almeida was a journalist for the pro-government, anti-clerical daily *O Seculo*. He had skillfully lampooned the apparitions for weeks. Present at the Cova on October 13, he wrote this report.

"One could see the immense multitude turn towards the sun, which appeared free from clouds and in its zenith. It looked like a plaque of dull silver, and it was possible to look at it without the least discomfort. It might have been an eclipse which was taking place. But at that moment a great shout went up, and one could hear the spectators nearest at hand shouting: 'A miracle! A miracle!'

"Before the astonished eyes of the crowd, whose aspect was biblical as they stood bareheaded, eagerly searching the sky, the sun trembled, made sudden incredible movements outside all cosmic laws — the sun 'danced' according to the typical expression of the people."⁴

The sun did more than dance. Dr. Almeida Garrett of Coimbra University, another secular eyewitness, recalled:

"The sun's disc did not remain immobile. This was not the sparkling of a heavenly body, for it spun round on itself in a mad whirl. Then, suddenly, one heard a clamor, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight. The sensation during those moments was terrible."⁵

Another secular witness, Dr. Domingos Pinto Coelho, who

happened to be an eye specialist, wrote a report for the newspaper *Ordem* which read in pertinent part:

“The sun, at one moment surrounded with scarlet flame, at another aureoled in yellow and deep purple, seemed to be in an exceedingly fast and whirling movement, at times appearing to be loosened from the sky and to be approaching the earth, strongly radiating heat.”⁶

Another astonishing fact: all those people, who were for the most part soaked to the bone, verified with joy and amazement that they were dry. The fact is attested to in the canonical process for Jacinta and Francisco, who were ultimately beatified on May 13, 2000.⁷

“The moment one would least expect it, our clothes were totally dry.” (Maria do Carmo)⁸

“My suit dried in an instant.” (John Carreira)⁹

The academician Marques da Cruz testified as follows:

This enormous multitude was drenched, for it had rained unceasingly since dawn. But—though this may appear incredible—after the great miracle everyone felt comfortable, and found his garments quite dry, a subject of general wonder ... The truth of this fact has been guaranteed with the greatest sincerity by dozens and dozens of persons of absolute trustworthiness, whom I have known intimately from childhood, and who are still alive (1937), as well as by persons from various districts of the country who were present.¹⁰

In one aspect, there is this fact about that miracle which is the most surprising. It is also the most evident proof that the miracle really took place. The quantity of energy necessary to accomplish the drying out of the ground and the clothes in such a rapid manner would have been so great that all persons present there would have been incinerated. Given that this aspect of the miracle radically contradicts the law of nature, no devil could have performed this miracle.¹¹

The Bishop of Leiria wrote in a pastoral letter published after the apparitions:

“The solar phenomenon of 13th October, described in newspapers of the time, was of a most marvelous nature and caused the deepest impression on those who had the good fortune to witness it.

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“The children had foretold the day and the hour at which it would occur. The news spread rapidly throughout Portugal, and in spite of bad weather, thousands and thousands of people congregated at the spot. At the hour of the last Apparition they witnessed all the manifestations of the sun which paid homage to the Queen of Heaven and earth, more brilliant than the heavenly body itself at its zenith of light.

“This phenomenon, which was not registered in any astronomical observatory, and could not, therefore, have been of natural origin, was witnessed by people of every category and class, by believers as well as unbelievers, journalists of the principal daily papers and even by people kilometers away, a fact which destroys any theory of collective hallucination.”¹²

In fact, there were witnesses to the Miracle of the Sun miles away from the apparition site. Twenty-five miles from Fatima, in Sao Pedro de Muel, the poet Alfonso Lopes Vieira saw the Miracle of the Sun while he was on his veranda next to the ocean:

“On that day, October 13, 1917, without remembering the predictions of the children, I was enchanted by a remarkable spectacle in the sky of a kind I had never seen before. I saw it from this veranda.”¹³

After the final Fatima apparition Lucia was seen mounted on the shoulders of a large man. She seemed inspired, addressing the multitude in a commanding voice: “Penance! Penance! Penance!” Her life after the apparitions would provide ample opportunity for her to practice what she preached.¹⁴

Notes

1) De Marchi, op. cit., pp. 142-143. 2) Ibid., p. 143. 3) Ibid., pp. 143-144. 4) Ibid., p. 144. 5) Ibid., p. 146. 6) Ibid., p. 147. 7) *The Devil's Final Battle*, edited by Father Paul Kramer (Terryville, Connecticut: The Missionary Association, 2002), p.12. 8) Frère François de Marie des Anges, *Fatima: Intimate Joy, World Event*, Book One, *The Astonishing Truth* (English edition, Immaculate Heart Publications, Buffalo, New York, 1993), p. 179. 9) Ibid. 10) TWTAf, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 340. 11) Father Paul Kramer, *La Battaglia Finale del Diavolo* (Buffalo, New York: The Missionary Association, 2004), p. 9. 12) De Marchi, op. cit., p. 150. 13) TWTAf, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 341-342. 14) For more accounts of the numerous testimonies of witnesses, of cures and of conversions resulting from this astounding phenomena, see Father Paul Kramer, *The Devil's Final Battle*, pp. 8-14.